

2024 TENURE, OWNERSHIP, AND TRANSITION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND SURVEY

The Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land (TOTAL) Survey is a study of agricultural landowners conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS). It provides data about operating and non-operating landlords, land ownership, income, expenses, debt, assets, landlord characteristics, and land transfer plans.

The 2024 survey collected data on all 50 states and gathered new information about when owned land was acquired. There also were changes to ownership type and principal landlords since the 2014 TOTAL survey. The TOTAL surveys build on information collected in the 1999 Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey (AELOS). NASS released results from the 2024 survey in March 2026.

OWNERS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

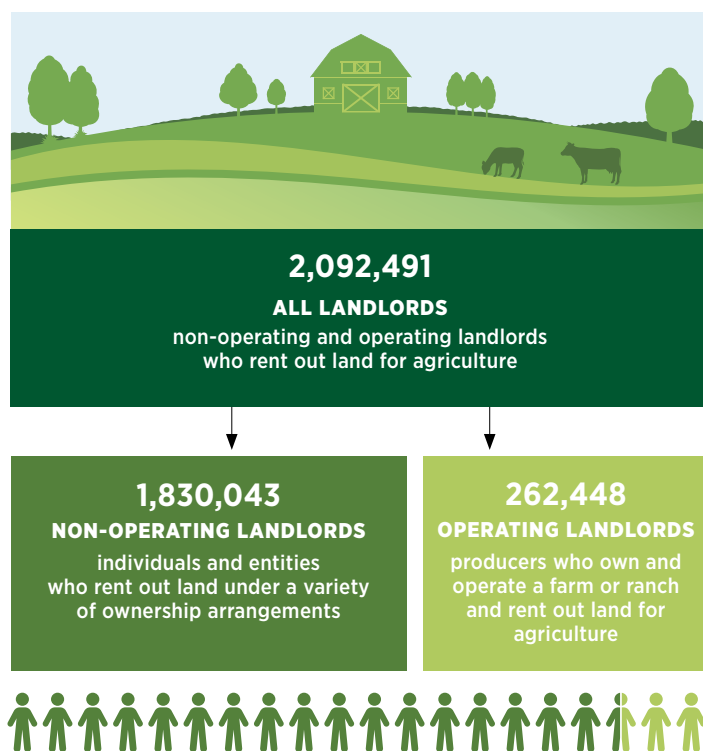
Nearly 2.1 million landowners owned and rented out 347.8 million acres of agricultural land in 2024. This accounted for 40% of the estimated 876 million acres of farmland and rangeland in the U.S. Over 260,000 of these landowners, or 13%, were themselves farmers and ranchers (operating landlords). They rented out 71.8 million acres to other farmers and ranchers — just over a fifth of all rented agricultural land. The remaining 87% of landlords were non-operating landlords — those who own agricultural land but do not farm or ranch themselves. There were 1.8 million non-operating landlords in 2024; they rented out over 276 million acres of agricultural land, or 79% of all rented acres.

Principal Landlords

The 2024 TOTAL survey asked respondents to designate a main non-operating landlord or senior partner to be the principal landlord in each ownership arrangement. The designated principal landlord serves as a representative of a landlord entity for the purposes of reporting out select landowner information.

Women Principal Landlords

Among all principal landlords, over 646,000, or 35%, were women in 2024. Women owned 39% of the land rented out by non-operating landlords and 31% of all land rented for agriculture.



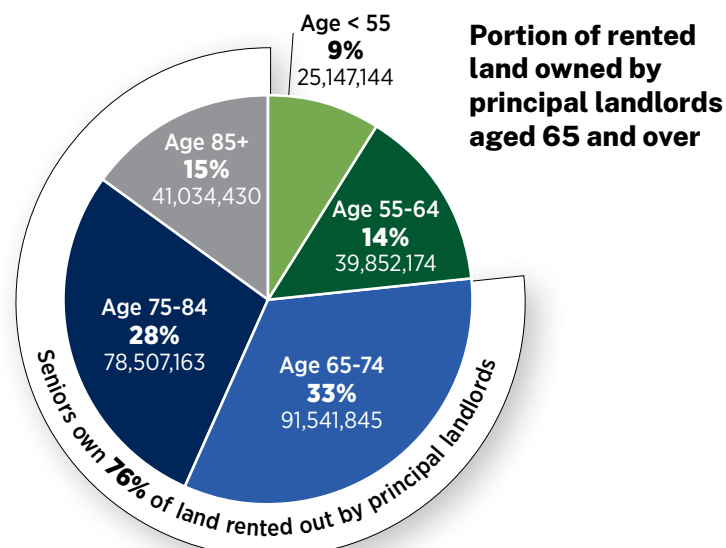
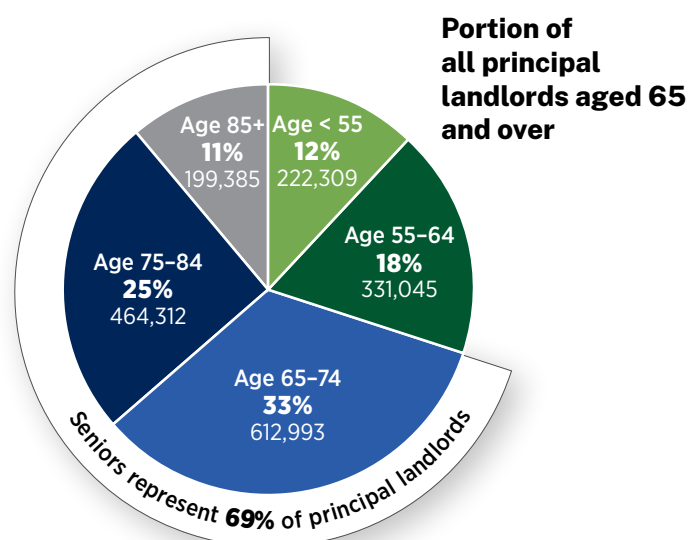
Senior Principal Landlords

Principal landlords tend to be older than the average producer in the U.S. In 2024, the average age of principal landlords was 69.2 years old, compared to 58.1 years old for producers. Nearly 70% of all principal landlords were 65 and older.

69.2
average age,
principal landlord

58.1
average age,
producer

These senior landlords owned 211 million acres, or 61% of *all* the land rented for agriculture. This amounts to nearly one quarter — 24% — of all farm and rangeland, up from 14% in the 2014 TOTAL survey. Land owned by senior landlords is more likely to transfer ownership in the decades to come.



LAND ACQUISITION AND TRANSFER

How Land was Acquired

Operating and non-operating landlords reported on how they acquired all of their agricultural land — the land they rented out and the land they owned and farmed themselves. Among operating landlords, the majority of their land was purchased, whereas non-operating landlords acquired most of their land through other methods including inheritance, trusts, and gifts. Across all methods, the majority of acquisitions happened prior to 2014: about 70% of purchases and 66% of acquisitions via other methods occurred before 2014.

Land Transfer Plans

Owners of agricultural land also reported on plans for their land in the next five years, including the acres they rented and the land they owned and operated. Landowners anticipate selling 35.5 million acres, or just 4% of agricultural land. This represents a slight increase from 2014 in the share of acres anticipated to be sold. Still, this may pose a challenge for aspiring farmers and those looking to expand because operating landowners reported that they acquired most of their land via purchase. Landowners also plan to transfer 7.4 million acres via gift or donation — just under 1% of agricultural land.

Another 91.5 million acres, or 10% of farmland, is or will be placed into trusts and 135 million acres — 15% of land — is or will be written into a will. Transfers via these methods represent more than twice the acres that landowners had or anticipated putting into trusts or wills in the 2014 TOTAL survey, which may indicate an acceleration in the amount of land due to change hands.

CHANGES TO THE 2024 TOTAL SURVEY

- Data was collected for all 50 states, rather than the contiguous 48, and is available only at the national and regional level.
- The 2024 survey asked respondents to designate a principal landlord for all non-operator ownership types. This allowed demographic data to be collected on all non-operators.
- New time horizons were added for the information collected on acquisitions of agricultural land and landowners' transfer plans.
- The survey collected data on different ownership types and included a new category for landlords with multiple types of ownership.

HOW TO ACCESS THE DATA: Data are available through the NASS [Quick Stats](#) database. Predefined queries and links to study highlights, survey report forms, and a description of the methodology are [posted online](#).

Scan the QR code for this fact sheet and other stats about farmland and ranchland likely to change hands, available on **AFT's Farmland Information Center**. The FIC is a clearinghouse for resources about farmland protection and stewardship. AFT is a national organization working to protect agricultural land, promote sound farming practices, and help farm families stay on the land. Learn how to become a member at farmland.org/membership.

